

241 life of the countryside. Oftentimes the boys are armed with slings from
136 which stones are projected at random into the midst of the crop, or
857 into the midst of a flock of birds as they rise. One of the reasons why
the Luo denude the land of trees is because they give harborage to
their bird enemies.

241 They are wise to insect pests also, and have a greater belief in
136 their remedies than many a farmer has in the aids supplied by our
781 civilization. The medicine is called by two names, "yadh miri" or
"yadh liasee." It is employed against a small red and black beetle,
called by the Luo "Kyanginje" which eats the flower of the millet,
thus preventing a crop. The medicine man who prepares it must be
a man of peaceable disposition and character, not a quarreller or
disputer with his neighbours. The whole success of the medicine
depends on the absence of disputation and quarrelling, and of the
grosser forms of vice, like adultery. No adulterer may be supplied
(857) with the medicine, for his very handling of it would nullify its usefulness,
not only for himself, but also for his neighbours. All must be
peace in the community until the harvest is reaped. Unlike other
medicines, which are tied to a pole and left to work their influence,
"yadh miri" is made into a decoction, which is sprinkled over the
growing crop at eventide. I have seen the operation at a place called
Maranda in Sakwa, Central Kavirondo. It was then being used against
maize borers. At a time when this pest was giving a good deal of
trouble to European farmers, I heard a man who was back in the
Reserve on leave from a farm in the Kitale district, pour scorn on the
methods used by Europeans with varicose sprays. He was by way
of being one of the more progressive men, but he had nothing but
absolute faith in the efficacy of "yadh miri."

578 Crops damaged by domestic stock gave rise to many an angry
645 passion. The owner of the crop had liberty to chastise personally the
herdboy (or man) through whose carelessness the stock were left
untended. If the herd were a lad he could be cuffed and thumped
without being able to proceed against the assailant. Nor did the father
protest, provided the chastisement were in reason, for he knew that
his son had rendered him liable to a claim for compensation. As
likely as not he would add his own quota to the punishment already
meted out. If the owner feared that he would get the worst of it in
a personal encounter with a headman, then he had his remedy at law.

241 When the crop is ready for harvesting it is the duty of the men
to do the reaping. In the case of millet, this is a laborious business,
calling for judgment, for not all the heads would be ripe, and some
must be left to ripen after the bulk has been reaped. It is the task
• (462) of the women and children to pack the crop into the grain baskets
957 and carry it to the grain stores. In the case of millet it is quite

241 common to allow some of the sturdier roots to spring up again and give a second crop. I have seen some very fine heads of grain as a result of this method.

251 The crop is stored, unthreshed if millet or maize, in large basket-
578 like receptacles, covered with thatch and standing on stones or supported on forked sticks across which a rough platform is made. It is the work of the man to prepare the grain stores, and I suppose that there is no more prolific source of domestic bickering than those supply. Some men are shiftless, and leave off the preparation of the stores until near to harvest, sometimes exhausting in so doing the patience of the wife. Or he may be neglectful, and leave the thatch unrepaired, rendering the grain liable to suffer from the weather. Many women would far rather see the living hut left in disrepair than that the grain should be imperilled.

251 The store varies in size according to the grain for which it is
265 intended. The large size is for millet and maize, the small for the small millet and sesame. The Luo name for them is "dzo." The large ones run up to six feet high by about six feet in diameter. The small about four feet by three. They are made from swamp reeds built in a very coarse basket work fashion, and are finished off with a coating of cow dung inside. The better made stores have provision for access to the grain, by the simple device of cutting away a section from the top of the side, just under the thatch. It used to be the custom for a present of a small basket of grain to be given to the Jahlé or medicine man, after harvest. This custom has already died out in many places.

241 It was the woman's first care to secure seed for the next year.
462 Millet and maize was hung in the head, sometimes outside from the branch of a tree, more frequently from the roof of the hut. Smaller grain, and beans were stored in pots in the living hut, and to ensure their being kept in good condition, it was the woman's duty to empty the contents of the pots periodically onto a "thigo" or large circular flat basket work tray, or some part of the courtyard swept clean, that the sun might keep them dry. Lack of seed, owing to a planting dying off from lack of rain was a serious matter. Seed was then begged from neighbours more fortunate.

242 Not all the grain went into the common store, for all the cultivation was by no means the common united effort of all the members of the family. The main effort of the members was put into the fields from which all were to draw their food supply, but in addition individual members had their own plots which are called "munda." The head of the family would have his own "munda," and the grain from this went into a separate store. This grain formed a reserve in

241 Similarly, during this time she must be careful where she walks. She
 98 can ruin a crop by walking through it. But, of course, in this case, she would suffer with the other members of the family.

● 462 From early childhood the girl is brought up as an agricultural
 77 labourer. There was no class of women divorced from the soil. The
 71 only class whose labours in agriculture were lightened were the women who belonged to the divining cult of "SEWE." Sewe is the spirit of divination and is supposed to have descended on those who have been delirious in illness. The delirium is the sign of possession. The devotees of the cult are mainly women, and they are a fairly common sight as they go about their avocations. They are skilled beggars as well as diviners. With their bodies festooned with strings of beads, shells, bells and other barbaric ornaments, they pass from knoll to knoll, and standing with their bodies leaning forward supported by a hand resting on a short stick they sing songs of the countryside and are rewarded by presents of small baskets of grain. In this way women who have been ill are enabled to help to replenish the grain stores, which have probably run low during the illness.

241 Gradually a change is coming over the life of the women, due to
 177 white influence. Ploughing by the men with teams of oxen, is setting
 252 women free for other tasks. This movement is by no means widespread, but it has begun, and its effect on the women has been great.
 462 Even if the husband has no team and plough himself, many wives do not rest content until the husband has hired a plough owner to come along and plough up the land. It is not unusual for ploughs to be taken 15 miles for this purpose. Again, the use of hand mills of the "Colman's" type, is easing women of much labour at the grind stones. These are much more common than ploughs, probably there are twenty mills for every plough in use. This is partly accounted for by the fact that the mills are turned by hand power, not by oxen. At this leisure girls and women take their share, but whereas you would never see a man down on his knees at the grindstone, you do see them turning a mill. New activities are employing the time of many women, and those who have learned to knit or make palm mats in recent years are rapidly increasing in numbers.

CHILD LABOUR:

1957 Generally speaking, from early childhood, all are required to make some contribution to the activities of the home. Girls for the fields, and boys for herding, is the broad division of labour, though the boys also lend a hand in the fields, and, very occasionally, a girl or woman may be seen herding. With the opening up of avenues of wage-earning to the boys on coffee and tea estates, and in other forms of employment, the male child is being made by imperceptible parents to make his contribution to the family life.

by

THE SILOTHI KATHORDO

[PT. VI

Industries.

241 Agricultural pursuits. Agriculture is the principal pursuit of the people and they have now become dependant upon their crops for the grain which forms their chief food. Millet and maize are grown freely and are ground into flour for making porridge. Men and women work together in the fields and dig them for the seed. They use the common hoe with a long handle when digging, and roughly hoe the ground, when rains are expected. Sweet potatoes, beans and sesame are grown more for change of diet and as additions, such as we should call savories, to the porridge than as necessities of life. When [302] the crops are a few inches high, the chief and all his people shave their heads, and from that time till harvest no one is allowed to shave again. After harvest the headman shaves and all the people follow his example. Should any one neglect this custom and shave before the time, it is said to be injurious [68] to the crops and to prevent the grain from ripening. The culprit is therefore fined for his heedless conduct. When the corn is in the ear, a goat is killed and the contents of the stomach are scattered about the field to prevent blight and to preserve the crops from being injured by hail-storms.

231 Cow-keeping. Cows form the principal wealth of the people. The numbers vary in a village according to the prosperity and success of the community. Milk is used as an article 234 of food, especially when sour and clotted, but it is more of a luxury, in the present progressive stage of the tribe, than a necessity; and the meat of the animals is almost entirely reserved for ceremonial use. Cattle are herded by boys and [342] young men, who mix their herds and flocks of goats and sheep. • [462] Women and girls are strictly forbidden to herd or to milk cows; they may churn and wash the milk-vessels, but these [462] their duties in connection with cows end. Each village has its cattle, and the young men and boys of the place are responsible for their safety during the day, while they graze on the hill-side. 234 When a cow calves, the calf is left with the dam during the first ten days and the cow is not milked. On the morning of the eleventh day the cow is milked and the milk is churned, the

THE SCHOOL AGE

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young girl is responsible for seeing that the food already prepared is given to the male and younger female members of the family. Males are by tradition not allowed to dip their hands in the food pot, this being exclusively a woman's duty. 857
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Apart from these strictly utilitarian activities, young girls slip off at intervals to play with their companions. It is during this period that male children part company with females and form their own separate play groups. Those who continue to play with girls to a later age are reproached. Although girls in the earlier phase of this age group do a considerable amount of domestic work, it is mainly of an introductory nature. Thus the mother cannot go away for a night and leave the young girl in charge. The errands given to her are simple and in accordance with her capabilities.

A later phase—ten to eleven. Again this is not an age of independence in domestic work. The young girl's duties are still limited by her inexperience. But now the mother concentrates on making the girl do more thoroughly the few duties she has learned. Two of the more important of these activities are fetching firewood and water. The mother begins to expect her daughter to make several journeys daily to the stream and at least one trip to fetch firewood without being told. If the girl forgets, she may be reproached or beaten. At this time a start is also made in the preparation of adult food. [861]

DISCIPLINE

The disciplinary training of girls of school-going age is theoretically a paternal as well as a maternal responsibility; but in practice the mother plays a much more important role than the father. It is against her mother that future blame for inefficiency in normal domestic duties will be directed. The young daughter is strictly 868
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MARRIED LIFE

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schooling of wives, but modern young women sometimes rebel against this ordered régime, choosing rather to do as they please in their new homes.

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Since the introduction of the plough, the part played by men in the cultivation of the fields has greatly increased. Clearing and ploughing are now done by men, but planting and harvesting are still carried on largely by women.

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Women's organizations. In the past, women's activities were limited in number. Apart from the communal dancing parties in which they took a great pride, there existed among certain related families councils to settle disputes and misconduct among women. This communal organization has tended to become weaker with the growing family individuality introduced by modern conditions.

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While Christian influence has increased their freedom by releasing women from tribal prejudice and by widening the horizon of men's views, pagan women are still hampered from taking an active part in modern economic and social activities.

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Women's organizations range from small religious groups to registered co-operative societies. The management of the co-operative societies is largely in the hands of Christian women. They are thus more progressive than their pagan neighbours, although the gap is rapidly narrowing owing to the influence exercised by Christian women upon the other women in the community.

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The changing economy. Before the introduction of a money economy, the garden formed the basis of the economic life of women. Their transactions depended on garden produce which they bartered in exchange for live animals. The more industrious and economical thus acquired considerable wealth, supplementing garden

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[Text continues on p.55]

MARRIED LIFE

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economy by handicrafts and exchanging pots and baskets for corn.

The introduction of modern household goods of a more durable nature has lessened women's chances of earning money through weaving baskets or making pots. The overcrowding of land has also meant an increased economic dependence on men. To satisfy family demands, most women engage in some kind of business transaction which often keeps them out of the home from morning till late in the evening. Although motor transport has improved these conditions, children have been unfavourably affected through neglect during the mother's prolonged absence. This change from sedentary occupation to long-distance travel has taken place since the coming of new economic standards, and at the moment it is very rare to find a woman who does not trade in a small way.

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WOMEN AND THE BIRTH OF CHILDREN

Customs and taboos. The customs and taboos observed by expectant mothers merely reflect the social attitude of Luo women to the birth of their children. Thus the aims of the customs and taboos can only be appreciated in the light of a social desire for the woman to give birth without difficulty. Fundamentally this is also a basis for the disapproval of the birth of twins, and also of abnormal deliveries.

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Concerning the persistence of the marital relationship during pregnancy there is no generally accepted restriction. But while custom varies from person to person, any sexual relationship continuing after the sixth month of pregnancy is regarded as excessive. The only social stigma attached to sexual relationship continued for the greater part of this period, is that it may provoke an open rebuke from the midwives or other women. Thus while no hard

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[Text continues on p. 57]

512 *Daily rhythm of family duties.* The daily programme of a
 442 mother with a young child is divided into two major
 264 phases, corresponding with the morning and the even-
 [153] ing meals. In the morning the activities include the
 [356] preparation of gruel for the child, preceded by suckling
 it and sweeping the house. When prepared, the gruel is
 left with a nurse, to be given to the child when it cries.
 The mother then goes to the field or to any major work
 of the day. Preparation of the morning meal begins at
 about 9 a.m., and by 10 a.m. the family disperses again,
 the men perhaps to herd cattle or to go to market, and
 the women to fetch firewood or bring water from the
 river.

[178] The idea of having a meal freshly prepared in the
 morning is of recent origin. In the past, people ate cold
 food preserved from the previous evening meal. A great
 proportion of what is eaten during the week comes from
 the garden.

[178] In former days, women were expected to prepare an
 afternoon gruel for their husbands at about 3 p.m. This
 is still the custom in some families, but modern women
 are quite ignorant of the practice in its traditional form.

868 *The social attitude towards male and female children.* The
 613 difference in the social attitude towards male and
 female children arises from considering them in relation
 to the future of the lineage to which they belong. A
 male child is looked upon as a dynamic element in the
 lineal structure. On the other hand, a female child,
 though a potential source of wealth, is regarded as an
 exporter of fertility from her parents' lineage to the
 lineage of her husband. Thus, if she becomes the mother
 of many children, her larger numbers are looked upon
 [192] with disfavour as taking something away from her original
 [593] family. This results in a superstitious feeling which
 affects her visits to the parental home.

THE RELUCTANT LUO

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After Mr. Ouyang had spoken, others said their piece, and I asked the opinions of some of the women, who will never speak unless they are directly asked. One replied, through an interpreter, in these words:

'I was against consolidation. My own land was fertile and I did not want to lose it and have other land not as good as mine. I tried to persuade my husband. We had many arguments, and the peace of our house was destroyed. At last I saw that I must give in if our home was to become peaceful again. We exchanged gardens, and then I saw that the new gardens were as fertile as my own. Now the men are helping women on the land and this is something that has never happened before. Men and women are working together. This is because the men see that there is money in growing crops and that bigger crops will make them rich.'

A second woman—both were middle-aged—spoke after her.

'I was not of that opinion. I wanted consolidation before it came here. If you have land near your home, you can work to improve it. If it is a long way off, you cannot put on manure. I understood the value of manure by seeing crops grown by the Better Farmers. Before, I had four shanks and one was over a mile away. Now they are all together and near my home. There is only one difficulty. Our custom is, when a son gets married, he leaves his father's shank to start one of his own. I do not want to break this custom, but now I have a married son and there is nowhere for him to go.'

And a third woman, rather older, added her piece.

'I was in favour of consolidation too. The boundaries of land have caused many disputes and quarrels amongst us. When there are fixed boundaries, these quarrels fade away. So I wanted consolidation before it came, and my husband agreed. Now I can farm properly and put manure on the shank; we have a shed for the cattle to stay in at night. Besides that, my husband employs two men. When he goes away I supervise them and the work is not so hard. Men and women never worked together before. Now they do, and this is a big thing.'